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U. S. FISHERY PRODUCTION IN 1946

In 1946 the little known menhaden became the major item in the United States fish catch, which totaled 4.2 billion pounds, the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, announced today.

The menhaden, an Atlantic coast fish used chiefly in the manufacture of fish meal and oil, replaced the Pacific pilchard or sardine which has supported the Nation's largest fishery for the past 12 years.

Although the 1946 production was not far below average in volume, the year was marked by extremes of success or failure almost without parallel in the history of the fisheries. Rosefish and tuna exceeded all previous production records; the salmon pack was the smallest since 1927; the menhaden catch was the largest on record; the pilchard fishery experienced the worst season in its history.

In terms of pounds landed, the leading fisheries last year were menhaden, pilchard, salmon, tuna, Alaska herring, and rosefish. These six accounted for more than half of the total production.

The Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the catch of menhaden was approximately 900,000,000 pounds, compared with 756,000,000 pounds in 1945 and 686,000,000 in 1944. The menhaden, which has supported a fishery since colonial times, is a schooling fish of the herring family which occurs in tremendous numbers along the Atlantic coast and in its bays and estuaries. Present centers of the menhaden industry are Lewes, Del., Reedville, Va., Port Monmouth, N. J., Beaufort and Morehead City, N. C., and Fernandina, Fla.

After maintaining a production averaging close to a billion pounds during the past decade, the pilchard fishery landed only 491,000,000 pounds in 1946. This was only about half the quantity taken the previous year. Pilchards were notably scarce in the waters of northern and central California, ordinarily the center of a busy fishery. In 1946 most of the pilchard boats that usually fish out of San Francisco and Monterey either turned to other types of fishing or moved to other ports. Almost the entire 1946 catch of pilchards was made off southern California.

Salmon was another Pacific coast fishery that fell far below normal yields. The pack of 4,396,684 cases by canneries in the United States and Alaska was the smallest since 1927. In 1945, also a poor year, 4,900,471 cases of salmon were packed.

Although the northern albacore fishery was almost a complete failure, tuna landings in California were so large that this industry set a new production record in 1946. Complete figures for the year are not yet available, but the pack for the first eleven months was within a few thousand cases of 1945's record pack of 4,237,000 cases and the year's total was certain to reach a considerably higher figure.

Alaska herring, which along with menhaden and pilchard supplies the raw materials for the fish meal and fish oil industries, continued the increase in productivity begun several years ago. From 113 million pounds in 1944 and 120 million in 1945, the catch of herring in the Territory rose to approximately 190 million pounds last year. Practically the entire catch of this fishery is converted into oil and meal.

Although the New England fisheries as a whole were slightly less productive in 1946 than in 1945, the major species in the catch--~~rosefish~~ made a gain of 38 percent compared with the previous year. Only a little more than a decade ago rosefish was a little used and almost unknown species; in 1946, landings totaled

180,000,000 pounds, or about a quarter of the total New England fish catch. Because the rosefish is marketed only in filleted form, even now the public is generally unfamiliar with its name or with the appearance of the fish.

Landings of all species at the principal New England ports totaled 640,000,000 pounds, compared with 670,000,000 in 1945.

On the Pacific coast, landings of salmon, halibut, flounders, and miscellaneous species at Seattle totaled about 55 million pounds in 1946, a decline of about 5 million pounds from the 1945 figure.

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